rice when introduction of genetically modified food is opposed by several countries and by experts?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BACHI SINGH RAWAT): (a) and (b) The Department of Biotechnology in collaboration with Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) is working at present on a Joint Research proposal on Golden Rice under the second phase of Indo-Swiss Collaboration in Biotechnology. In spite of resistance to genetically modified crops by some countries, genetically engineered crops have been cultivated in about 46.9 million hectares during the year 2000 all over the world. Developing countries like Argentina, China, South Africa, Romania, Mexico, Bulgaria, Portugal, Ukraine and Uruguay have almost 11 million hectares under transgenic crop cultivation. Public concerns regarding the safety of environment and consumers are addressed globally through stringent national regulatory frameworks.

Recent National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau (NNMB) repeat survey has indicated the prevalence of deficiency of vitamin-A in 0.7% of pre-school children. Accordingly, it is estimated that about 12 million people may be suffering from vitamin-A deficiency. Traditional breeding methods have been unsuccessful in producing crops containing high vitamin-A content. Further, existing vitamin-A supplementation programmes are expensive and complicated. Development of vitamin-A rich rice varieties to address nutritional requirements is one of the sustainable solutions, taking note of all bio-safety requirements. This rice would be introduced only after successfully completing all trials following the national regulations.

International Conference on reforms in Biotechnology

2256. SHRI RAVI SHANKAR PRASAD: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that an International Conference was organised recently in Delhi for imposing effectively regulatory reforms, in view of the rapid development of Biotechnology;

(b) if so, the decisions taken or measures proposed for

safeguarding against inherent perils in using biotechnology in the field of health care, agriculture, industry, etc.; and

(c) the names of organisers and sponsors of this Conference?

THE MINISTER OF STATC IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BACHI SINGH RAWAT): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. An International Conference on Biotechnology on the Fast Track: Realising Regulatory Reform was organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) on July 17-19, 2001 at Hotel Taj Palace, New Delhi, in partnership with the Government of NCT of Delhi, and sponsored by some private industries. At the conference, a decision was taken to prepare a White Paper on regulatory procedures to be followed in the area of biotechnology.

Establishment of techno-parks in Gujarat

2257. SHRI ANANTRAY DEVSHANKER DAVE: Will the Minister of SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are establishing techno-parks in various States;

(b) if so, the details of such parks established in Gujarat;

(c) whether any fresh proposal of Gujarat is pending; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BACHI SINGH RAWAT): (a) There are no Parks called techno-parks established by the Central Government in various States. However, the National Science and Technology. Entrepreneurship Development Board (NSTEDB) under the Department of Science and Technology (DST) is promoting Science and Technology Entrepreneurs Parks (STEPs) in and around academic and R&D Institutions of excellence with a view to promoting the spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship among S&ST persons. The STEPs are sponsored jointly by the DST, all India Financial Institutions (IDBI, IFCX and ICICI), State Governments and the Host Institutions. So far, 16 STEPs have been approved as on 31.7.2001.